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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [BU](#)  
SUBJECT: BULGARIA: GOVT VOTES TO TRIPLE DEPLOYMENT IN  
AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. SOFIA 204

[1](#)B. SENIOR-NORDBERG EMAIL (3/16/07)

Classified By: DCM Alex Karagiannis, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) In a decision discussed on March 14 and signed on March 16, the Council of Ministers formally approved two separate deployments in support of NATO operations in Afghanistan. This decision is binding and does not require parliamentary approval. The first deployment will consist of 120 soldiers and 15 staff officers, who will deploy to Kabul in May 2007 as part of an Italian combat group of the Capital Regional Command. The second will include up to 200 troops who will assume responsibility for internal perimeter security at Kandahar Airfield as of the beginning of June [1](#)2007. These 335 troops come in addition to the 85 Bulgarian soldiers who are currently serving under ISAF in a mechanized infantry platoon, medical teams, a military police and counterintelligence platoon, and as staff officers at Kabul Airport and in the Hungarian-led PRT in Pol-e-Khomri.

[1](#)2. (C) Comment: While Bulgaria's deployment to Kabul was announced months ago, the GoB's decision to deploy forces to Kandahar comes only six weeks after SACEUR's request to CHOD Stoykov. The government's flexibility and responsiveness demonstrate an impressive political commitment to NATO's mission in Afghanistan, despite a public mood that is strongly skeptical of any overseas deployments. Caveats on these two additional deployments have not been finalized. We expect that forces deployed to Kandahar are unlikely to be equipped for missions beyond the airfield and are likely to be subject to restrictive caveats, which nevertheless will not prejudice their main mission of airfield force protection. We will continue to engage the GoB to target the equipment and training shortfalls that they cite as preventing them from lifting caveats on their forces deployed elsewhere. End comment.

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